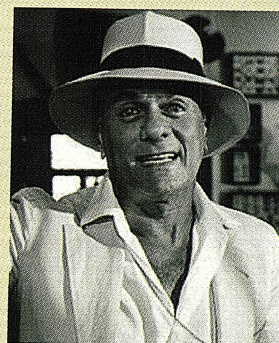
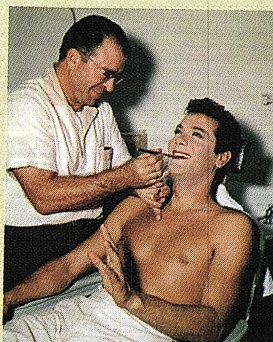


# "Ladies and Gentlemen..."

## Mr Tony Cur



### "Call me Tony!"

Even at 76 you can still hear the street tough in Tony Curtis' voice. Tony grew up in the Bronx, in impoverished circumstances. But, as he says, "during the 30s, until I became maybe 14 or 15, I had my eye on the sparrow. I was gonna be in movies." So after a short career on a submarine during the war ("because Cary Grant had made a picture called *Destination Tokyo* where he played a submarine commander") and time at a New York acting school, Tony Curtis' headed East.

"So how does a young street tough from the Bronx become the biggest star in Hollywood?"

"How do you like that. It's better than a kick in the ass, huh? I'm so thrilled by it my friend and I wouldn't even know how to explain it. It was like winning the lottery. I came out to Hollywood, I didn't have to kiss anybody, kiss any... thing, and I just got in the movies."

"Tell us some of your memories of making *Some Like It Hot*."

"My memory is as acute as my ass" he shoots back, "That was a little joke. I remember everything."

**TONY CURTIS INTERVIEW BY TIM LEE**

The anecdote he most enjoys is the one involving himself, Marilyn and the famous designer, Ori Kelly, who designed both Marilyn's and the guys' dresses for the film. "Ori came by the studio one day and took my measurements" he chuckles. "I was in my shorts, and Ori was a very 'extravagant' person, you know. So he took his tape measure and measured my shoulder, 34, 33, the inseam 34 1/2, waist 32. And then when he finished with me he went in to do Marilyn next door. So she comes out and she had a pair of panties on and a silk blouse. So he started to measure her, measured around the waist and her back and shoulders. And then he put the tape around her bottom and he looked up at Marilyn and he said 'you know, Tony Curtis has a better-looking ass than you.' You know what she did? She unbuttoned her blouse, opened it and said 'he doesn't have tits like these.'" Tony bursts out laughing. "And that's the truth." He stops laughing as soon as his much repeated quote regarding kissing Marilyn comes up. "Did you really say kissing Marilyn was like kissing Hitler?"

"Never said it. Never said it."

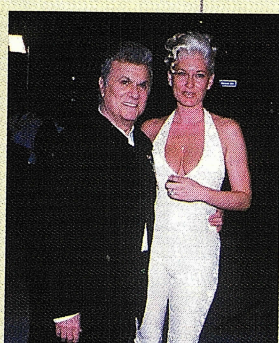
"It must annoy you a bit."

"It annoys me terribly" he says, sounding hurt. "And I know where it came from. At that period of time when we were making the movie, Marilyn was somewhat obstreperous and a little difficult to work with. Not for me, but she was late all the time and didn't show up some days and then when she did show up she didn't know her lines, they had to write them out on cards. So it was difficult working. But, listen, I finished that picture with her. When did I say that, during the making of the movie? How could I have said something like that to that girl? It's bullshit! And it offended me but I know where it came from."

"We never took any stills when the movie was over, for publicity. Those pictures that we did, they used a double for Marilyn, and that made it so difficult. So they [the studio] got pissed off at her. And



# tis."



the way to get at her was that somebody said somebody asked Tony 'what was it like kissing Marilyn?' and he said 'kissing her was like kissing Hitler.' I don't even know where the fuck that came from, excuse my language."

"It just pisses me off! To this day it really does, you know. I had an excellent relationship with Marilyn. We were friends, you know, ten years earlier, in 1949 we met. I was 24, she was 23 and we started going out together, we were lovers for about four months. So we had a really nice relationship in those early years. I drove her around in my old Buick Riada, with the green top down, torn up leather upholstery. Her hair wasn't quite blonde then, it was more reddish and she used to wear see-through blouses then; she used to stop traffic - this was in 49."

"Did that make things easier between you two when you worked together on *Some Like It Hot*?"

"Well, yes, it was perfect because we'd already been together. She was, really, she was a little girl. As time went on I realized after we met in those first days that when we ran into each other again she was going to get even with every guy that made her drop down to her knees, drop on her knees, you know. And that's what she was doing, you know, she was getting even with all those guys that abused her and used her. But, my friend, that's the name of the business."

By all accounts the "business" had nearly destroyed Marilyn by the time filming of *Some Like It Hot* was underway. For all the respect and fondness Tony expresses, he's unable to avoid mentioning the difficult situation Marilyn was in at the time.

"You know, she was the most famous Hollywood actress at that time and she was living like a bag lady. She had a tiny little house somewhere, had someone coming in once in a while to clean it, she wasn't feeling well. This was about the time when the Kennedys were supposed to have had these affairs with her. And I knew the reality of it. I said 'I couldn't imagine anyone having an affair with a

woman who was so', forgive me for saying it but, 'so slovenly.' And that's what she was near the end; this was our Marilyn."

Tony Curtis has gone through his own ups and downs since the success of *Some Like It Hot*. Unlike his co-star and friend, Jack Lemmon, who could still be seen on the big screen when he died in June this year, Tony turned his back on Hollywood in the late 80s. "You know I was having a lot of trouble," he says, dropping his voice to a whisper, sounding genuinely emotional. "My marriages were falling apart, I lost a son to a heroin overdose. I really was going through a shabby and difficult time in my life. That's the way it was, you know, so I moved out."

Though always having pursued the arts beyond merely acting, in the last few years Tony has focussed solely on the fine arts. He's not interested in acting for its own sake. "I've got an extensive library. I'm drawing, I paint, I make assemblages, collages; I'm a painter, you know, I'm an artist in that sense. I just don't want to end up in a movie doing it for money or, you know, I'm not gonna do bits in the movies and I'm not gonna play old men, doctors, lawyers, interns. I'm not gonna do that, I'm just not gonna do it."

Then he pauses, and when he starts talking he sounds like the young Bronx kid again. "But let me tell you something that's just happened to me about a month and a half ago: they signed me to do a musical called *Some Like It Hot*. And I'm gonna play the Joe E. Brown part. Can you imagine? The eccentric millionaire! It's gonna be a full-fledged musical. I've already started tap-dancing and some singing and we're gonna start rehearsals in January or February, open in Houston, Texas. They're building a brand new theatre complex and we're gonna be the first play that plays in it."

"That's great."

"Isn't that great, pal," he says. "Oh, I'm so happy. And we'll tour the country, I'll do that for a year. And look at that, pal, I keep winning the lottery."